



The Springfield Renaissance School, gr. 6-12

An Expeditionary Learning School

***Respect *Courage *Responsibility *Friendship *Cultural Sensitivity *Perseverance *Self-Discipline**

Innovation School Prospectus **15 December, 2010**

- **Executive Summary**

Our initial plans for the Innovation School plan center upon continuing to use and expand upon the autonomies gained under our Voluntary Pilot School status as we seek to raise the level of student achievement and school performance. Our goal as a school is to become a regional, state and national model for building and sustaining a high-achieving urban public school. The school will continue its vital relationship with Expeditionary Learning Schools, as well as the many organizations with whom it has built partnerships over the last five years, including (but not limited to) the following:

- Expeditionary Learning Schools
- University of Massachusetts, Amherst
- Springfield College
- Mount Holyoke College
- Smith College
- The Davis Foundation
- The Nellie Mae Foundation
- GEAR UP
- Upward Bound
- Let's Get Ready
- Center for Collaborative Education
- Springfield Promise

The school will continue to improve its efforts to support student's acquiring 21st Century Skills within a school program based upon the three R's- Rigor, Relevance, and Relationship. While the school has enjoyed initial success relative to SPS performance data, we recognize that our students' performance scores are separated from state and national averages by a considerable gap, one that closely matches the Achievement Gap bedeviling urban and poor schools around the country. Innovation School autonomies will support the development and/or continuation of policies, procedures, structures and systems proven to close this gap.

- **Public Statement**

The Springfield Renaissance School seeks to convert from its status as a Voluntary Pilot school to an Innovation School for the coming 2011-2012 school year. The autonomies the school has begun to use this school year have been recognized by students and staff as a source for tangible improvements in the school's learning environment, improvements evidenced by student performance indicators such as suspension rates, attendance, and completion rates of student led family conferences. We believe Innovation School status will enable us to continue to use specific autonomies to improve student performance and will also align the school more closely with the district's and state's school improvement endeavors.

II. Innovation School Vision, Mission, and Statement of Need

VISION

The Renaissance School is a community of thoughtful, committed students, parents, and staff dedicated to changing the world. What students learn at our school equips them with the knowledge, skills and confidence to become leaders. We know that no matter how flawed our society, we can and will make it better. We are connected to a tradition of educational and social reform and embrace our responsibility to move closer to a just and equitable world.

Teaching and learning at the Springfield Renaissance School follows the design of Expeditionary Learning Schools and places rigor, relationships and relevance at the center of our academic program. We honor the truth that there are multiple ways to “get smart” and accept the responsibility of differentiating instruction and assessment that holds all students to high levels of performance. Teachers, community members, and students work collaboratively to design curriculum, explore issues and ideas, and contribute to our local and global communities.

The Springfield Renaissance School’s teachers and students are citizens and scholars. We believe that character is an essential quality of successful teaching and learning. Our students and teachers live by our community commitments and model what an inclusive, caring and respectful school community should be. Students and teachers recognize and celebrate our diversity and guard against injustice no matter what form it takes. Our school culture is both purposeful and playful. We are compassionate but we are not afraid to hold each other accountable for maintaining the highest educational standards. We believe in celebrating our successes and confronting our shortcomings. Together we are on a journey toward excellence.

MISSION

The school’s mission is to provide a rigorous academic program for college-bound students in a small, personalized setting that impels and supports students to use their minds well, to care for themselves and others, and to rise to the challenges and duties of citizenship.

Specific needs or challenges the school will be designed to address: The school was designed to address the issues found within the urban school crisis confronting cities like Springfield across our state and country- low rates of student attendance, unsafe school climates, static academic achievement gaps between groups of students (racial, language and special education), low graduation rates, and even lower college and career readiness rates. The school’s structures and systems create a learning experience that embeds 21st century learning skills within a curriculum that is centered upon the 3 R’s- Rigor, Relevance and Relationship. The school has met with a degree of initial success, but as a school community we are mindful that all our students are not achieving at the level they are capable of, and that as a school we have significant areas of improvement. Innovation School status will enable the school to continue developing a program that resolves these weaknesses, one that is consistent with the school’s design principles and to the needs of its students and families.

The school’s specific goals for school performance and student improvement are as follows:

- 100% on-time high school graduation
- 100% college acceptance for all SRS graduates
- 80% of SRS graduates complete a two or four year college/university degree within 3 or 5 years of graduation
- 80% of our students score at the Proficient/Advanced level on the MCAS ELA/Reading, Mathematics, and Science exams
- 80% of our students score at or above the state mean scores on the SAT or ACT exams

II. How Will Autonomy and Flexibility Be Used?

A. Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment

- Core curriculum
 - a. The curriculum and course sequence, based upon the state frameworks, is organized around Expeditions and Investigations, which are multi-disciplinary and based upon collaborative learning, fieldwork, authentic products, work with experts, and service.
- Meeting the needs of diverse learners
 - a. Special Education and English Language Learner services are delivered in the least restrictive environment with full inclusion a school-wide goal.
 - b. Heterogeneous Grouping, grades 6-10.
 - c. An honors curriculum is available for qualified students (based on performance and teacher recommendation) within heterogeneous courses in grades 7-10. This curriculum is coordinated through the school's 7-10 curriculum maps and an Honors Program Coordinator.
 - d. Courses in grades 11 and 12 are leveled (AP, honors, college prep).
 - e. Enrichment and intervention courses are available for qualified/recommended students as elective courses, Intensive mini-courses and through extended hours (afterschool and Saturday school).
- Credit
 - a. Students receive a ½ credit for Crew each year. Crew is our daily advisory, which meets for 3.5 hours each week. The crew curriculum is organized around social and emotional well-being, academic skills, college readiness, literacy, and character education.
 - b. Students who complete the freshmen Outward Bound Course will receive a .5 credit towards their PE distribution requirement
 - c. Students receive a ¼ credit for each mini-course they take during Intensives. This credit may be used to fulfill the total credit requirements, or in some cases, it may be used to meet a SPS distribution requirement (for example, art or PE).
 - d. Students receive a ½ credit for their junior year internship.
 - e. Courses offered through the Saturday School program. Credit will be based upon Massachusetts' standards for time on learning.
- Schedule and Calendar
 - a. The school's schedule is organized around common planning time for grade level teams.
 - b. All students' daily schedules consist of 4 core classes (ELA, Mathematics, Social Studies, and Science), an elective course, and Crew

Assessment and Graduation Requirements

- Graduation Requirements
 - a. Meet or exceed SPS graduation credit requirements.
 - b. Completion of the Junior Internship
 - c. Successful completion of the Crew curriculum (**including Student Led Family Conferences and Passage Portfolios**)
 - d. Complete and submit an application to a 4 year college or university
 - e. One of the following senior performance assessments:
 - Senior Portfolio—Complete a senior portfolio of work that demonstrates competency in the Qualities of Learners. This portfolio is created and assessed in crew. Seniors present one portion of the senior portfolio in a senior exhibition demonstrating competence in at least one Quality of Learners, with substantial reflection and attention to presentation. Or,
 - Senior Talk—Shares a public reflection of growth over the course of being a Renaissance student on the model of Plato's Apologia.
 - Senior Expedition—Independent project each student completes and shares during his or her senior year.
- Standards Based Grading
 - a. Grades are based on students' progress toward long term learning targets. Long term learning targets are based on state standards.

- b. The primary report card will be a standards based report card that shows student achievement on the learning targets for each course. The SPS report card may also continue to be used.
- c. Formative assessments (assessments FOR learning) are integral to daily lessons and provide both teachers and students with feedback about their progress toward learning targets. This data informs instruction and helps students to track their progress.
- d. Summative assessments (assessments OF learning), both traditional and performance based, allow students to demonstrate their mastery of each learning target.
- e. A scale of 1 to 4 is used to assess student mastery of each long-term learning target. Each numeric score reflects the student's level of mastery. These numeric "scores" mean the following:
 - 4 means "exemplary work for the target"
 - 3 means "meets target"
 - 2 means "approaching target" (at least half way there)
 - 1 means "does not meet target"

The school uses a conversion chart to translate standards based grades to traditional letter grades and grade point averages.

- **School Wide Assessments**

- a. Required Student-Led Family Conferences (SLFCs) for **successful completion of Crew** and graduation. SLFCs are supported within the daily crew curriculum, with significant amounts of time and attention devoted to gathering work, consulting with students, and practicing presentations. The school will make every effort to support family participation in the SLFCs, including flexible scheduling, home visits, the approved participation of other significant adults in students lives in lieu of parents/guardians, and use of substitutes to enable teachers to meet with families and students during the course of the instructional day.
- b. Required Passage Portfolios in 8th and 10th grade for **successful completion of Crew** and graduation. Passage Portfolios are supported within the daily crew curriculum, with significant amounts of time and attention devoted to gathering work, consulting with students, and practicing presentations. The school will make every effort to support family participation in the Passage Portfolios, including flexible scheduling, home visits, the approved participation of other significant adults in students lives in lieu of parents/guardians, and use of substitutes to enable teachers to meet with families and students during the course of the instructional day.
- c. Course generated literacy and math assessments: These are formative assessments given twice each trimester in ELA, Social Studies and Science for assessment of literacy skills, and bi-weekly in Math to assess math skills. Teachers will work in collaboration with instructional leaders to use the data collected to inform instruction.
- d. Mid-Term and Final exams Frameworks.
- e. MCAS exams
- f. Standardized tests which may include the PSAT, SAT, AP exams, ACT, and others.

B & D. Budget and Staffing Policies and Procedures

- School staffing levels will be determined by the SPS allocation formula
- Teacher and Staff FTEs, general fund based and grant funded, will be converted to a dollar amount. That amount will be based upon the average salary for the various unit members. In the case where the school's actual average salaries are more than the district's average the school will be responsible for making the staffing and program reductions or adjustments to adhere to its staffing budget. In the case where the school's average salary is less than the district's, the school will have the responsibility for using those funds to support its vision and mission as directed by its Governing Board.
- Teacher and Staff FTEs, general fund based and grant funded, will be assigned at the discretion of the school's administration, as directed by its Governing Board. The sole exceptions to this provision would be staff allocated to the school based upon Special Education and English Language Learner enrollment.
- The SPS Athletic Department will continue to fund the school's coaching positions
- Stipends for teacher leader positions and paid teacher supervisory positions (breakfast and lunch) will continue to be funded through the SPS general fund
- The interview and hiring process for the school must be complete by the start of the summer so that new teachers and staff are able to attend required professional development courses and workshops specific to the school's pedagogy, structures, culture, and systems (see Professional Development autonomies)

C. Schedule and Calendar

- The school's schedule is organized around common planning time for grade level teams.
- All students' daily schedules consist of 4 core classes (ELA, Mathematics, Social Studies, and Science), an elective course, and Crew.
- The school has begun conversations regarding creating a school calendar that addresses the learning issues associated with the "summer gap"

E. Professional Development

- The school's implementation of Expeditionary Learning's structures and principles will remain the focus of the school's professional development program. The school will use its professional development funds and its status as a mentor school within the EL Schools network to continue the following:
 - i. On-site coaching from Expeditionary Learning school designers
 - ii. Mandatory summer professional development workshops and courses for all new and returning teachers and staff (differentiated based upon experience and performance)
 - iii. Participation in local, regional, and national seminars, workshops, and conferences
 - iv. Continuing the Crew Coordinator position, begun in the 2010-2011 school year
- The Governing Board, in consultation with the principal, administrators and teachers, will approve the themes and content of professional development activities on the basis of the school's mission and data derived from academic outcomes and student achievement and needs.
- In addition to the contractual obligation of one professional development session per week after school, the school will look to implement a weekly late start for regular classes so that teachers may meet for professional development during the morning while students are engaged in enrichment and/or intervention courses and activities provided by partner organizations and contracted vendors
- The school will also continue and expand its on-site and job-embedded professional development, including model classrooms, peer coaching, and a teacher mentorship program

F. District Policies and Procedures

- The school will continue to have an elected Governing Board, representative of its families, students, staff, and community. The Governing Board will continue to set policy regarding staffing, finance, professional development and all policy/organizational matters affecting the school's vision and mission
- The school will use an assessment system driven by standards based grading
- The school will require all students to engage in one significant after-school activity (school or community based) as a component of its Crew course
- The school will begin its staffing process by March of every year, and will be able to offer binding contracts to new and returning teachers by 15 May every year

III. Capacity of Applicant Group

The Governing Board will appoint a representative group of teachers, students and family members to the Innovation Plan Committee, which will also include designees of both the superintendent and the school committee. The group will use the pilot plan developed over a 15 month period as the basis for its work on the Innovation School plan. The school's success at engaging the school community and securing school committee approval of its Voluntary Pilot School plan speaks to our confidence in the IPC's ability to engage the school community and construct an ISP that moves the school forward.

IV. Proposed Timetable for Development and Establishment of the Innovation School

The school aims to win Innovation School status by May 2011. To do so we propose the following timeline:

December 20, 2010 Prospectus submitted to SPS Superintendent

January 20-March 15, 2011 Innovation Plan Committee established. Community meetings and conversations held. IPC working sessions. Two drafts vetted through a one week public comment process for each draft. Final draft submitted to SRS faculty for vote of approval

March 16, -May 16, 2011 Innovation School Plan submitted to SPS School Committee for approval. At least one public hearing held by SPS School Committee prior to formal vote. Formal vote by SPS School Committee